

The Alabama Coaching Framework

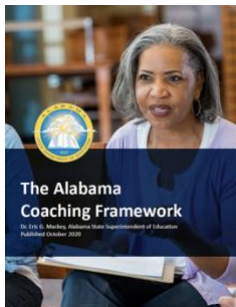
Ensuring a Single Approach to Coaching

In 2019, the Alabama Legislature passed the [Alabama Literacy Act](#) to improve the reading proficiency of public school kindergarten to third grade students and ensure that those students are able to read at or above grade level by the end of third grade. This legislation established and funded regional and local literacy coaches to provide targeted support to improve core reading instruction in identified full- and partial-support elementary schools. Additionally, several other state initiatives were utilizing regional specialists to coach teachers in various areas, including supporting high-quality science, mathematics, and technology instruction through the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative; implementing multi-tiered systems of support; and supporting school improvement.

What is an instructional coach?

An instructional coach is a partner, a consistent resource within the school, supporting teachers with things like classroom behavior, first-time teaching, intervention, and analyzing data to prescriptively provide instruction and meet the needs of all students.

Access the full framework [here](#).



Knowing that state laws and state board policies govern the placement of coaches in specific schools, Alabama State Superintendent, Dr. Eric Mackey, recognized that coaches from multiple initiatives might, at times, be assigned to work in the same school. For example, a school identified for Comprehensive School Improvement might also be identified as an Alabama Reading Initiative Full Support School and would therefore be assigned coaches from both the Office of School Improvement and the Alabama Reading Initiative. Since the state did not have a specific framework for coaching, Dr. Mackey understood that it was possible that in these situations, the coaches from these two offices might use different coaching approaches within the same school, creating confusion or challenges for the teachers and leaders working with them. Based on this understanding, he envisioned a single framework for coaching, not specific to any content area, but one that would create a common language and vision for coaching. To support this vision and ensure that consistent, high-quality, evidence-based coaching support was provided across all these initiatives, Dr. Mackey requested in 2019 that the Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC) assist the state in creating a single statewide coaching framework.

To begin this work, R7CC worked with Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) leadership to identify a cross-agency team representing initiatives and programs across the department, guaranteeing that all students were represented. While this work would have typically been completed face-to-face in two or three sessions, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented any in-person work. So, R7CC planned and facilitated a series of seven three-hour virtual sessions with the team over a period of two months. These virtual sessions were collaborative and

Teachers need that constant support in teaching, coaching, and mentoring so that every step along the way, they are improving their craft.

– Dr. Eric Mackey,
 Alabama State Superintendent of Education, 2019

engaging, with multiple breakout groups and rounds of feedback during the meetings to ensure that all voices were heard. When planning the sessions, R7CC considered the state’s strategic plan and Alabama’s Professional Learning Standards. Using evidence-based research and practice, R7CC facilitated the team in developing a coaching vision and mission statement and defining Alabama’s goals for coaching. These goals clearly established the relationships between the student, teacher, coach, and district necessary for student success. Additionally, R7CC guided the team in defining the roles and responsibilities of those at each level of the coaching process to outline the professional interactions and supports necessary for a successful coaching program. District stakeholders were brought to the table as needed to provide advice from the local education agency perspective. Using current research on coaching, the work of the framework development team, and feedback from the stakeholders, R7CC drafted the *Alabama Coaching Framework*, and it was published in October 2020.

The collaborative work to develop the framework included many within the Alabama State Department of Education.

The development team also prioritized the insight of school administrators, as they offer valuable, on-site perspectives.



The work has not stopped with the development of the framework. Currently, R7CC and the Alabama Reading Initiative are partnering to pilot the *Alabama Coaching Framework* in an implementation zone that includes three districts: Bessemer City Schools, Cullman County Schools, and Pike Road Schools. R7CC is providing professional learning to implementation teams in these districts on the implementation process, including the use of teams and data to guide implementation. A practice profile defining the components and effective coaching practices expected in Student-Centered Coaching has been developed. Districts will use the practice profile to improve the quality of coaching provided

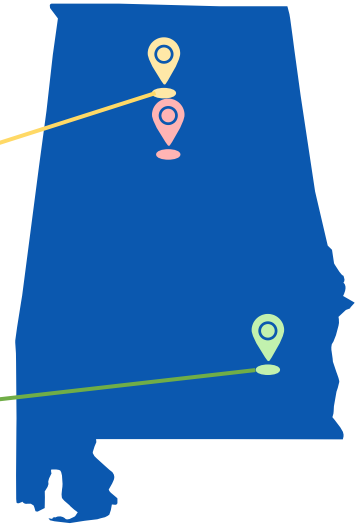
I have enjoyed the collaboration between many different groups in the state. Knowing that we are all working towards the same goal and are on the same page has been exciting and affirming.

– A member of the framework development team

to teachers and leaders within their schools. Through this work, the districts will learn more about how the framework’s use affects the quality of coaching provided to teachers, the quality of instruction teachers provide when they receive coaching informed by the coaching framework, and the outcomes of students taught by teachers who receive coaching informed by the coaching framework.

“Exceptional coaching in Cullman County Schools supports and empowers teachers, students, and stakeholders to collaborate, creating exceptional educational experiences for every child, every day.”

The Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning at Pike Road Schools stated that the implementation of the framework will “leave no opportunity for misinterpretation.”



One pilot district, Pike Road Schools (PRS), developed the following coaching vision to guide their work: “The vision for PRS coaching is to ensure that teachers are supported and empowered through strategically scaffolded guidance, professional learning on the use of research-based strategies, engagement, and reflection to increase student achievement and growth.”

R7CC and ALSDE will use the results of this pilot to inform continuous improvement of the framework as well as professional development and coaching to support regional and local coaches, district and school leaders, and teachers in using the framework to inform their coaching relationships. And most importantly, to continue to refine those coaching practices with the ultimate goal of changing outcomes for all students. The lessons learned from this pilot will also be used to inform the scaling of the coaching framework by other offices that utilize a coaching approach, including the new English Learner and Mathematics Improvement regional coaches established by the Alabama Legislature in 2021 and 2022, respectively.